

DR BRENDA ANG is Deputy Director of the Communicable Diseases Centre and Chairman of the Infection Control Committee at Tan Tock Seng Hospital. She is also a Senior Consultant and Deputy Head of its Department of Infectious Diseases.

DR CLAIRE ANG graduated from NUS Medical School in 1985 and did her HMDP in Paediatric Anaesthesia. She is currently Senior Consultant in the Department of Anaesthesia and Intensive Care in Singapore General Hospital and is also the Head of Paediatric Services in the department. She was a member of Team 2002 for the separation of Craniopagus twins Ganga and Jamuna.



Back (L-R): Third sister Selina, Claire, Brenda, eldest brother Aleck, Erik, cousin Jannifer

Front (L-R): Mother, Grandmother (late), Father

DR ERIK ANG is a Consultant Plastic Surgeon at Mount Elizabeth Medical Centre. He is also the Honorary Secretary of the Chapter of Plastic Surgeons, College of Surgeons, an active member of the Singapore Association of Plastic Surgeons, the Singapore Society for Cosmetic (Aesthetic) Surgeons, Fellow of Academy of Medicine of Singapore (Plastic Surgery) and the International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery.

Siblings in Medicine

Brenda

When I was a child, I wanted to be a ...

Ballerina. I was inspired by watching some of the great ballet companies on the rare occasions that they toured in Singapore. After a performance, I would try to do turns and jumps over the sofa. However, reality hit me sometime around 'A' Levels, and I gave up that idea for medical school.

Growing up, the things I remember best about my brothers/sisters are ...

Playing together, whether indoors or in the garden, climbing all over the swing.

The most influential person in early life is ...

My mother. I will never stop being amazed at how she brought up the five of us, ran the household, and taught music.

My best medical school memory is ...

Hostel days in KE Hall- Orientation, KE-KK Games, supper in D floor lounge, studying past midnight. Some of the friendships forged in those years have been the most long-lasting and special.

I wanted to be a doctor because ...

I had the grades (then), and my mother wanted me to.

The most memorable thing I can remember as a practising doctor is ...

A young woman with lupus who had a very unusual infection, and survived heart surgery and a very stormy post-op course. She is still alive today, and sends me a Christmas card every year.

The best/worst thing a colleague/patient ever said to me ...

The best thing a colleague ever said to me, when he told me why I could never go on a certain career path, was that I was "too straight".

The worst thing a patient's relative ever said to me was that I had killed her mother because I had not responded fast enough to a collapse.

I spend my Sunday mornings doing ...

Ward rounds, going to church, and doing marketing.

A bad habit I would like to kick is ...

Procrastination. When tasks or chores pile up, I find myself just trying to beat deadlines all the time.

I will need to be more efficient and plan to finish things way earlier than the deadline.

It is good/bad to have siblings in Medicine because ...

There are many common things to talk about and share, and we have friends across at least three different medical classes.

However, it limits our contacts outside the medical world somewhat, and sometimes dinner conversations can be too dominated by medical topics.

My greatest extravagance is ...

A set of Swarovski binoculars that gives crystal clear vision – very handy for watching our son when he is sailing far from shore, or spotting wildlife on safari.

The book I am currently reading is ...

Sorry, no books for leisure. I cannot even keep up with journals, or the daily newspaper.

My favourite book/author is ...

I have not read any books for leisure for a long time.

The music playing in my car stereo is ...

92.4 FM when they have good music and good presenters. Otherwise, my music could be Bach, Chopin, Beethoven, Rachmaninov, Saint-Saens, Simon and Garfunkel. But sometimes, I am forced to listen to whatever my son has on his iPod.

My favourite song/singer is ...

Not sure if I can just name one.

The last movie I watched was ...

Letters from Iwo Jima, with husband and son. Heartbreaking and very moving show. Generally, I seldom go to the movies, but for some reason, both men in the family wanted to watch that.

My biggest food weakness is ...

Foie gras. I know it is not healthy and I do not want to think about the force feeding. It has been a long time since I had any though.

I would like to be remembered as ...

A good wife, mother and daughter, and not too bad a physician. ■



Chinese New Year 2006.

Claire

When I was a child, I wanted to be a ...
Farmer.

The most influential person in early life is ...
My mother.

My best medical school memory is ...
Staying at KE V11 hall and getting up to all sorts of activities.

I wanted to be a doctor because ...
I had very altruistic aims (and still do!).

A bad habit I would like to kick is ...
Saying: "Okay I can do that" to everything.

It is bad to have a sibling in Medicine because ...
People are always asking me to ask my sister on their behalf for an ID consultation because they are too afraid to ask her themselves.

My greatest extravagance is ...
None (*Haha*).

The book I am currently reading is ...
The Penge Bungalow Mystery featuring Rumpole of the Bailey.

The music playing in my car stereo is ...
Daughtrey, Il Divo, plus "hip" music from my children's CDs.

The last movie I watched was ...
Transformers.

I think everyone should watch ...
The Lord of the Rings.

My biggest food weakness is ...
Pastries.

I would like to be remembered as ...
Being someone who cared. ■



Erik



Yap & Ang Surgical Associates.

When I was a child, I wanted to be a ...
Policeman or Fireman. This came from watching too much TV, where they were showing SWAT, Police Story and Emergency.

Growing up, the things I remember best about my brothers/sister are ...
Being there to guide me and protect me, who is the youngest in the family.

I also remember the time when Brenda had the application forms for NUS Medical School. Everyone in the family was so excited when she was accepted. By the time it was my turn, the “wow” factor in the family of entering Medicine had largely been dissipated.

I also remember some of the guys who were wooing Brenda and Claire. That was the time when it was my turn to protect them, *hee*.

The most influential people in early life is ...
My family.

My best medical school memory is ...
Being taught for the very first time, the basics of a good clinical history and physical examination (read “auscultation and percussion of the chest”)

during “E” clinics in second year medical school by a senior and all-rounded respiratory physician at the old Toa Payoh Hospital, Dr Yap Choon Yet.

Who would have known then that 10 years later, he would become my father-in-law.

I wanted to be a doctor because ...
My parents wanted me to be one, I wanted to respect their wishes, and it seemed like the natural career to take. It had nothing to do with having my sisters in Medicine. In fact, at that time when I was applying for Medical School, Brenda was a Houseman/Junior Medical Officer and Claire was in fourth/final year Medical School, not exactly the easiest times in one’s professional career.

The most memorable thing I can remember as a practising doctor is ...
When Karen and I said goodbye to our then 3-year-old son at the height of SARS, whom we sent to my parents home the day we discovered that Karen was one of the team of doctors who had rounded on a super-infected patient in SGH before everyone was aware that the patient was a super-infecter. We decided to quarantine ourselves in our apartment.

The best/worst thing a colleague ever said to me ...

The best thing a colleague has ever said to me was: “Yes, I will marry you.” (Yes, that’s Karen, my beloved wife, colleagues in the same Department a decade ago, life companion and now business partner in our private surgical practice.)

The worst things that colleagues have said to me are those that insult my abilities as a doctor and as a surgeon. I say insult, because I think I can distinguish between constructive criticism based on objective assessments, which I welcome and accept, and insult, which is based on biasness and personal feelings.

The best/worst thing a colleague/patient ever said to me ...

The best things that patients have said to me are: “Thank you for saving my life.”

The worst thing a patient has done to me was to throw a rotten egg at me. I was a Medical Officer in the Orthopaedic Ward when I was trying to get a difficult patient (long-term, chronic opiate user) who happened to be MRSA-positive, not to sally back and forth the whole length of Ward 75 SGH. Apparently he took offence at the restriction of freedom and “ambushed” me with a rotten egg along the ward corridor.

I spend my Sunday mornings ...

Going to church with my family, followed by ward rounds. We will then head for the swimming pool at Raffles Town Club.

A bad habit I would like to kick is ...

Plastic Surgeons have no bad habits (just like Neurosurgeons, see August 2007 issue of *SMA News*).

It is good/bad to have siblings in Medicine because ...

It is good because they gave me a lot of advice and guidance, for example, what to study, which tutors to go to, what things to expect during housemanship and so on. Well, giving advice is not a one-way thing because in turn I can give them advice in my field of practice.

It is good because many of my sisters’ friends, though most are senior to me, also became and are becoming my friends.

It may be bad for some when people start to compare, especially when rotating through

departments that they have been through before, but I do not let that bother me. Brenda, Claire and I have developed quite divergent specialties, different, yet in many ways inter-related.

During my time with the Burn Unit at SGH, the three of us were managing the same patients together, in some way or other – Brenda would be looking into the ID aspects, and Claire would be looking after the ICU and anaesthesia parts.

I have yet been able to entice them to private practice now, though.

My greatest extravagance is ...

A corner in the attic of our home designed to house my collection of (unbuilt) 1/35 plastic scale model tanks, and 1/24, 1/32 and 1/48 plastic scale model planes (read “Airfix”), a hobby that I grew up with, stopped while I was going through Medical School and training to be a Plastic Surgeon, and picked up again in the last few years after I had exited.

My favourite book/author is ...

WW2 War comics. If anyone has collection of these second-hand war comics, I will be glad to consider purchasing them.

The music playing in my car stereo is ...

92.4 FM in the mornings, power 98 in the evenings.

My favourite song/singer is ...

No favourite song or singer, but lately I have begun to enjoy tuning into 1.FM – Bay Smooth Jazz through iTunes...this station is on even during consultations. Otherwise I enjoy listening to “hard-core” operas.

The last movie I watched was ...

Spiderman 3 (with Timmy).

I think everyone should watch ...

Star Wars.

My biggest food weakness is ...

Any type of sashimi.

I would like to be remembered as ...

A son who is respectful to his parents and elders, a husband who is loving and caring, a father who is firm but fair and there for the boys, a well-balanced professional, and a God-fearing man. ■